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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 015518

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: SURVEY TRIP TO MUZZAFARABAD

REF: ISLAMABAD 15513

1. Summary: A USG survey team consisting of personnel from State, USAID, and DOD visited Muzzafarabad and surrounding areas of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) from October 11-13. During the visit, the team met with officials from the local and AJK government, the Pakistani military, and relief workers to assess needs and relief efforts in the aftermath of the October 8 earthquake. All interlocutors believed that the immediate need was shelter for the ensuing 3 to 4 months followed by a permanent water supply. By the fourth day following the earthquake, most of those with life-threatening injuries had been evacuated. Medical personnel felt that re-establishing electricity and running water was critical to preventing and treating disease. Relief efforts by the Pakistani military, local government, Pakistani population and the international community were enormous, but coordination could be drastically improved. Relief officials believed that the major focus of disaster response efforts should now shift to communities surrounding Muzzaffarabad. End summary.

A Long Way to Normalcy

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2. The one thing that all interlocutors -- from senior military generals to laborers who lost family -- agreed upon was the need for tents to be used as semi-permanent shelter for about 3 to 4 months. While most stressed winterized units, a minority argued that securing any shelter was more important than waiting for winterized tents. The latter group added that affected populations were resilient and needed only basic protection from the elements. The Pakistani military, which was spearheading and directing most relief operations, had yet to establish a long-term reconstruction plan and was primarily focused on getting to and stabilizing the injured.

Logistics Will Win the War

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3. Much of the civilian leadership of AJK and Muzzafarabad were killed or severely injured. The military was leading relief efforts but found coordination with the central command in Islamabad and with non-military relief efforts in the city complicated. In many cases, private citizens were simply hiring trucks to ship goods to Muzzafarabad and then throwing the goods off the trucks while driving through the city. Survivors heard of ad hoc collection and distribution centers by word-of-mouth; these sites lacked security elements to ensure orderly disbursement. Many main roads to the city were passable, although cluttered with rocks and debris. Several points along the road from Murree to Muzzaffarabad were limited to a single lane of traffic. These choke points were barely wide enough for a local "jingle" truck to pass, causing traffic jams and delaying needed relief supplies.

Getting out of the Big City

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4. Most relief personnel considered the situation in Muzzaffarabad to be stable and were encouraging relief efforts to shift to smaller communities in AJK. Pakistani military officers considered Chokoti, Jure, Sawan, Dhani and Patika to be priority areas. Almost a week after the disaster, these areas had yet to receive any assistance.

Comment

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5. Our team believed that the military, civilian officials, and relief personnel in Muzzafarabad were doing a credible job in attempting to deliver assistance in the face of this overwhelming disaster. There was a strong recognition and desire to do more both in Muzzafarabad and surrounding areas, limited only by the logistical challenges in transporting relief supplies and personnel. While coordination could certainly be improved among those providing relief on the ground and with central authorities in Islamabad, we believe that such challenges will diminish as the military and civilian authorities regain firm control and communications infrastructure recovers.

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